

Apr. 1, 1863

## U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION.

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Woman's Central Association of Relief,

No. 10 Cooper Union, New York.

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### REPORT

OF THE

Corresponding Secretary of the Sub-Committee  
ON CORRESPONDENCE AND SUPPLIES.

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The Hospital Supplies of the Commission having fallen off very much, from obvious causes, it was suggested, at the beginning of the year, that a more thorough organization of that part of the country from whence we draw supplies, and the establishment of closer relations with our auxiliaries might, by increasing their interest in our work, stimulate them to renewed efforts in its behalf.

The work of the Commission invites the closest scrutiny, and it is because those who have investigated it most thoroughly—who have examined its books, followed its inspectors into hospitals and camps, its agents to the battle-field, and its supplies to the soldiers—are its most earnest supporters, that we wish to say to those who stay at home, and by their unwearied labor and patriotic zeal keep this great machinery in motion: You cannot see what is going on, but you shall *know* all and everything. We want to have you see what we see, and know what we know, and thus be able to determine fairly for yourselves, whether the Commission is or is not worthy of your support and confidence.

As a preliminary measure, and to open a more general correspondence, the following circular letter was sent, about the middle of last January, to the Secretaries of all our Auxiliary Societies. Its object was to obtain as well as to give information.

U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION.

WOMAN'S CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF RELIEF,

10 COOPER UNION, THIRD AVENUE,



New York, January 13th, 1863.

Madam.—A council was held in Washington, at the rooms of the U. S. Sanitary Commission, on the 22d and 24th of last November. It was composed of delegates from the different branches of the Commission, Chicago, and Louisville, Ky., being represented, as well as Boston and New York.

The following conclusions were arrived at:

1st. There are 130,000 sick and wounded soldiers now scattered among our hospitals and camps.

2d. Our Government is most liberal and humane in its care of these suffering soldiers, and the Surgeon-General of the Medical Department zealous and efficient in the performance of his duties.

3d. The historical experience of all nations, in time of war (as well as our own), shows that, notwithstanding the utmost liberality of Governmental provision, there is a large amount of suffering which must be alleviated, if at all, by the volunteer aid of the people.

4th. After an experience of eighteen months, it is acknowledged, by the officers of the Army of the United States, that the best and safest channel (because the only one authorized by Government) through which the gifts from the people to the soldiers can pass, is the United States Sanitary Commission. The Commission works in perfect harmony with the Government.

5th. The Commission collects supplies from all the loyal States, and distributes them to the soldiers of the United States, without distinction of State or Regiment, giving first to those who *need it most*, and *wherever the need is the greatest*. This is the federal principle upon which all the operations of the Commission are based.

6th. Out of 25,000 boxes sent to the Commission, but one has been lost. There are 25,000 boxes of Hospital Supplies, directed to individuals in regiments, now in the storehouses of Express Companies in Washington, who are unable to deliver them because the owners cannot be found.

7th. Supplies, even when *received* by regiments, cannot be used by the very sick or seriously wounded men of that regiment. These men are transferred to General Hospitals, where they are no longer under the care of the Regimental Surgeon.

8th. Although our Army and Navy is now larger than ever, with a corresponding increase of sickness, the amount of supplies now received by the Commission is ten times less than the receipts of a year ago.

9th. In view of this fact, a more thorough organization of the whole country should be attempted, and Soldiers' Aid Societies, tributary to the Commission, established in every city, town, and village throughout the loyal States. If possible, the contributions should be made regularly, that the Commission may know what supplies it may depend upon.

10th. There is at present no reserve stock of supplies in the storehouses of the Commission, either at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, or Washington, with the exception of lint, bandages, old linen, old cotton, and pillow-cases. The most imperative need is for flannel shirts, flannel drawers, socks, slippers, bed-sacks, quilts, and blankets.

And, lastly, we acknowledge that the magnitude and importance of this work have only lately burst fully upon us, with the heavy responsibility attached to it. We hope that every loyal woman in the country will feel this responsibility with us, and look upon this work as a sacred duty. It requires sacrifice; it requires time, and money, and earnest, steady, relentless work, which is to last as long as the war lasts. Let us think of it as a privilege as well as a duty, with a deep conviction of the high principles which govern it—humanity, patriotism, Christianity.

We are desirous of making every explanation in regard to the above statements which may be desired.

As Secretary of the Soldiers' Aid Society of your town or village, an auxiliary of the Woman's Central Association of Relief, branch of the Sanitary Commission, will you be kind enough to answer the following questions, which I ask with the view of obtaining such information as will lead to the furtherance of our common object—the care of our sick and wounded soldiers and sailors:

1st. What is the state of feeling which exists in your community in regard to the Commission?

2d. Is the broad, federal principle upon which it is based thoroughly understood by the people, and do they agree that it is the right one?

3d. What reports, if any, prejudicial to the Commission are in circulation in your neighborhood? And what difficulties have you to contend with?

4th. When was your Society organized, and how often does it meet? Please send me the name of your Society, and the names of its president and secretary. Is it the only one in your town or village?

5th. What circulars, issued by the Commission, have lately been received by you? Is this printed matter read aloud at the meetings, and is it received with any interest?

6th. Have all supplies sent from you to us been acknowledged? If not, please send a list, made out in detail, of the contents of each box missing, with the date of forwarding. We have received many unknown boxes which we would gladly acknowledge.

7th. To which branch of the Commission is it most economical for you to send supplies, and what facilities have you in regard to transportation?

I shall be much indebted if you will send me a friendly letter, in answer to the above questions, within ten days after the receipt of this, if possible. Any



suggestions from you, by which the work can be made more effective, will be most gladly received by me.

LOUISE LEE SCHUYLER,  
11 Cooper Union,  
New York.

Miss ELLEN COLLINS,  
Mrs. T. D'OREMIEULX,  
Miss GERTRUDE STEVENS,  
Miss LOUISA LEE SCHUYLER,  
Mr. S. W. BRIDGHAM,  
W. H. DRAPER, M. D.,

} Committee on Correspondence and Supplies.

Any information in regard to sick and wounded soldiers in hospital in and near Washington, D. C., and Frederick, Md., can be obtained by applying to FRED. LAW OLMSTED, General Secretary of the Commission, at Washington. The name of the individual, of his regiment and Company, should be sent. This information, returned in twenty-four hours after receipt of letter of inquiry, can be obtained from no other source.

For soldiers in hospital in New York and vicinity, apply to Dr. McDougall, U. S. A., No. 110 Grand street.

I propose to answer the questions contained in this circular separately, each answer being based upon returns made in 235 letters; these letters representing the feeling of the people throughout this State, Connecticut, the Western parts of Massachusetts and Vermont, and the northern part of New Jersey.

And 1st. The state of feeling which exists in regard to the Commission is *favorable*—more so at the present time than ever before. The degree of favor is in direct proportion to the efforts which have been made to enlighten and instruct those who are interested in the care of the soldier, as to the principles and workings of the Commission.

2d. The Federal principle upon which the Commission is based is more thoroughly understood and appreciated throughout the State of New York, and in Massachusetts and Vermont, than in Connecticut and New Jersey.

3d. The Commission has *lived down* most of the prejudicial reports in circulation concerning it. It is still accused of dishonesty, and all other crimes, by those whose only motive is to undermine the confidence of the people in anything which tends to strengthen our national cause. There are always returned soldiers bringing with them stories of dishonest surgeons and nurses, some of which must necessarily be true in so large an army as ours. We never deny these reports, but the *proofs* (names and dates) are asked for, with a promise of investigation, and the punish-

ment of all convicted delinquents. We have not, as yet, been able to trace back any of these reports to anything tangible. The man in Troy, who was so willing and anxious to swear that he had bought Sanitary stores from one of our agents, disappeared the day before the oath was to be administered. In almost every village there is the story of a returned soldier, who spent his last dollar for a pot of jelly, and then finds his mother's name on the wrapper. But where is the soldier, and what was his mother's name? A lady goes to Willard's, and finds in her room sheets marked with her own name, and the stamp of the Commission. But who is the lady? and where are the sheets? One more story—the scene of which is also laid in Washington. A sick and discharged soldier, too weak to go on his homeward journey without a few days of rest, while lying on a comfortable bed, was seen to shake his head, rub his eyes, and gaze intently at the handsome quilt spread over him. Suddenly, he fell back, exclaiming with deep emotion: "It is—yes, it is my wife's best spare room quilt!" We do not give his name; the *place* was the "Home for sick soldiers passing through Washington," established by the Sanitary Commission.

The chief difficulty our auxiliaries have to contend with is the want of funds. The households have been gleaned of all superfluous linen and cotton, and the price of new materials is double and treble the usual rates. By offering to pay the freight charges at this end of the line, it would throw the moneyed burden upon this city, and thus enable the little towns and villages to put all their funds into materials. This would relieve them very much, and would increase our own receipts.

4th. It is impossible to condense the answers to this question. Most of the societies were organized in the fall of '61. The meetings are generally held in the churches.

5th. In the country, the printed matter issued by the Commission is received with the greatest interest. It is read aloud at the meetings, passed from house to house, and extracts from the circulars and reports are very generally read from the pulpit. Every day letters come to us, asking for more. (Dr. Hosmer's report to the General Aid Society at Buffalo, Mr. Knapp's reports, and our own Second Semi-Annual, have been particularly mentioned.)

6th. With few exceptions, all supplies sent to us have been received and acknowledged. When not acknowledged, it has been owing to the carelessness of the donors in not following the forwarding directions—thus making it impossible to identify their respective packages. Occasionally, a letter of acknowledgment has miscarried.

7th. The facilities in regard to transportation vary. Some speak of boats and railroads passing their doors, and so down to a letter from Delaware County, N. Y., which says : "It is most convenient to send to New York. We cart our supplies *fifty miles* to the Hudson River, and then forward by boat or railroad." In several instances, they are carted fifteen, twenty, and thirty miles. But comparatively little freight has been carried without charge, and these transportation bills are enormous. The Long Island, Jamaica, and Harlem Railroads are the only ones which have consented to carry packages for the Commission free of charge, though all our railroad companies have been applied to. Similar applications have been granted by all the New England railroads centering in Boston, and the Western railroads carry the supplies of the Commission entirely free, or at very reduced rates.

The few suggestions made by our auxiliaries, were to ask us to publish more frequently in the newspapers—the "*Weekly Tribune*" being particularly mentioned as having a wide circulation in the country—also the "*N. Y. Observer*."

This whole correspondence is most interesting. Some of the letters are from fourteen to sixteen pages in length, friendly, sympathetic, and encouraging letters, some of them even confidential, and all so full of interest in our work, and regrets that they are unable to do more for it. It is the farmers and villagers who are making the real sacrifices for the war—they work early and late for the soldiers before and after the day's work is done; they walk and drive for miles through snow and mud to the weekly sewing circle; they go from house to house begging money and materials they *deny themselves*. "I, and a few friends, have determined not to buy any more new material for our own clothes now that the prices are so high, and the hospital supplies are so much needed," writes one of these women—"we cannot afford any longer to give both to ourselves and to the soldiers."

The work is no longer being carried on from motives of humanity as it was at first; it has become a test of *patriotism*. Those who are the truest patriots, the real lovers of the Union, are the earnest, steadfast workers—it is the "grumblers," the "peace democrats," the "secessionists," and the "copperheads," they tell us, who will not understand it, who discourage it in every way.

*Plan of Organization.*—The original plan of organization of the Commission for the seaboard States, was the establishment of three branches, or distributing depots at Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Each of these branches was to collect supplies from that part of the country, which



would naturally seek it as its nearest or most convenient depot. The large cities and towns in these fields, were to be "centres of collection," gathering supplies from their vicinities, and forwarding them to the distributing depots. The branches were to organize and canvass their respective fields as they thought best.

At the counsel held in Washington, last November, the plan of organization of the Boston Branch, was thought superior to all others, and we have consequently adopted it. This is the division of the country into sections, these sections being determined, not by county lines, (although these are often most convenient,) but by lines of transportation, rivers, and railroads. One or more associate managers are appointed to each section.

*The Duties of an Associate Manager are—*

1st. To ascertain whether Soldiers' Aid Societies exist in every Town and Village of her section, and if so, for what they are working.

2d. When they are not working for the Commission, to use all her influence to induce them to do so, meeting all objections by bringing forward in a kindly spirit the convincing proofs furnished by the published documents of the Commission, and the testimony of the Officers of the army of the United States.

3d. When such Societies, tributary to the Commission, do not exist, we wish to have them organized by our Associate, or, if preferred, she may send us the name of the right person, in the particular town or village, to whom we should address ourselves.

4th. To visit all the auxiliary Societies in her section, from time to time, for the purpose of giving information, answering questions, dispelling doubts, and encouraging workers;—this personal intercourse being thought very desirable. This, however, would be at the option of our Associate, who can judge better than we can how best to produce the desired result in her own section.

5th. To keep broad Federal principle, upon which the Commission is based, ever before the people. Our whole experience shows that our people are truly liberal in spirit, and only ask for information as to *the best way* of working for the sick and wounded. Where, during the past year, whole communities have worked for special regiments, it was only necessary to explain the National principle upon which the Sanitary Commission rests, and it was immediately adopted.

6th. To bring every influence to bear which may stimulate this work, the responsibility of which we feel so deeply, and which may tend to make it more thorough and efficient. It should always be presented on the high grounds of Duty, Patriotism, and Christianity.

7th. To keep herself thoroughly informed of the working of the Commission, by frequent correspondence with this office. When questions are asked us which we cannot answer, we write to the General Secretary at Washington for information, or refer our Associate directly to him.

8th. To send us a friendly letter once a month, with a report of the condition of things in her section, pointing out any errors on our part, and making any suggestions which may help us to make our work more effective, and which will be gladly received.

At the February meeting of our Board, I was empowered to appoint

Associate Managers, subject to the approval of the Board, and was authorized, at the same time, to invite these ladies to attend the regular meetings of the Association. Up to the present time but eleven Associate Managers have been appointed. They have entered upon their duties with great interest and energy, some of them going from village to village visiting and inspecting our auxiliaries, and starting new societies.

In addition to this, several gentlemen have been lecturing for us in behalf of the Commission, at intervals during the last three months. Mr. Furness has been speaking in the towns and villages upon the Hudson River, and has lately returned from a most successful tour along the line of the N. Y. Central Railroad, and the centre of this State. The Rev. Mr. Hadley has been canvassing the line of the Harlem Railroad, and is now in Saratoga and Washington Counties. The Rev. Herbert Lancey is now in the Western part of this State, and Chaplain Phillips has been speaking in the Presbyterian churches of this city. The Rev. Mr. Tiffany is doing most excellent service in Connecticut. He, and Mr. Hadley, and Mr. Lancey, are the only lecturers at present assigned to this branch by the central office in Washington. The result of these efforts, so far as we can judge, has been most beneficial.

I will give but one interesting incident from the reports of these gentlemen. Mr. Furness had just been addressing an audience in Rochester, N. Y., and writes: "While I was talking, a man came in and took his seat, listening very attentively. After I had finished, he rose and proceeded to tell how the lives of sixteen Rochester boys were saved by the Sanitary Commission, and so earnest did he become, that at last his voice trembled, his eyes filled, and he fairly sobbed out—'And I pray God every day to bless every man connected with that noble institution.' Coming, as this did, without any possible collusion, and from the man who, as well as I could learn, had been deputed by the city of Rochester to look after the soldiers, it went home with thrilling effect."

In another month we shall have closed the second year of our work, and we may well feel gratified at the proofs which are now daily received of the way in which the Sanitary Commission has grown into the confidence of our people and our army. We are still, however, too dependent upon the sympathy of our friends not to appreciate and feel grateful for a compliment lately received from one of our correspondents, who was "so glad to find we were *not a soulless corporation!*"

Respectfully submitted,

LOUISA LEE SCHUYLER,  
Mem. Executive Com.

April 1st, 1863.





